



Headlines

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Indiana NRCS Newsletter

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Issue 53

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Heart to Heart with Hardisty

It's the beginning of a new fiscal year for Indiana NRCS and we are already starting off better than we did last year! We've avoided another furlough and anticipate receiving our budget in the first quarter of fiscal year 2015.

As we jump into this new year, we will continue focusing on past priorities but will also focus our efforts on new priorities. This year, emphasis will be placed on supporting more conservation planning which ties directly into one of our top priorities - soil health. Likewise, we will continue supporting and implementing the Conservation Delivery Streamlining Initiative (CDSI), Administrative Transformation, Partnership Initiatives, and the new Farm Bill. Our District Conservationists and Soil Conservationists have done such a good job in managing the EQIP contracts, I am anticipating that these folks will be able to spend more time in the field with the farmers this year.



*Jane Hardisty
State Conservationist*

FY15 will be the year to implement some changes within Indiana NRCS. Over the past several months, our staff have been working diligently as part of the Operational Improvement Team. Recommendations by this team have been evaluated and will be implemented this year. Additionally, with phases of CDSI implemented, state office staff in place for Administrative Transformation, and a new Farm Bill, we will likely see a lot of improvements for Indiana NRCS this year.

Since our next issue of Hoosier Headlines will be distributed after Thanksgiving, I want to take the time to say THANKS. We all have so much in which to be thankful. One of the things I'm most thankful for is being State Conservationist to the many dedicated employees of Indiana NRCS. Your hard work makes so many things possible for landowners and I'm certain they, too, will be saying a heartfelt thanks during Thanksgiving. Enjoy the holidays!

Jane E. Hardisty

**** * * Employee Spotlight * * * ***

Brian Kruse, State Forester

Q: As the one of the newest NRCS employees, please help us get to know you better. Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I was born and raised in a small rural farming community near Kanakakee, Illinois. My youth was spent detassling corn, walking beans, picking up rocks out of fields, combining, cleaning out corn bends, and as a pilot (piling sheep manure). I attended Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, where I received both a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Forestry. My thesis work was related to reforestation on former agricultural bottomlands in the Cache River Watershed.

Q: How did you become interested in conservation?

I blame my interests in conservation on my father. Before I could walk my father was teaching me about nature and conservation. After receiving his wildlife/biology degree at Illinois State University, my father's first job out of college was at a Girl Scout camp. For the first few years of my life, I was surrounded by girl scouts and nature. One of my fond memories was watching my father drop food coloring into a jar of water with a tad pole inside, in order to show how they breathe.

Q: I understand you worked for NRCS in other states before coming to Indiana. Where did you work and what did you do?

I come to Indiana via the Missouri NRCS where I served as a Field Forester. In that role, I serviced sixteen heavily forested counties by providing technical assistance and training to field offices and landowners, including: forest management, woodland restoration, riparian forest development, wildlife habitat development, agro-forestry practices, etc. Implementing these forestry duties involved using Toolkit, ProTracts, ArcMap and GPS units in conjunction with assisting landowners with conservation programs such as EQIP, CStP, CRP, CREP, WRP, SWCD cost-share, and Targeted Watershed Projects. Before working with NRCS I worked for the US Forest Service, out of the Mark Twain National Forest in Missouri. My job was primarily marking timber for harvest and inspecting logging operations on the Potosi Ranger District. Other jobs duties included: helping with prescribed burns, western firefighting details and trail maintenance.



Brian Kruse, his wife Victoria and their dog Rouseau.

I've also held other jobs in forestry that includes: Illinois Department of Natural Resources where I was District Forester Intern and the Virginia Department of Forestry where I served as a Riparian Forester.

Q: What are you looking forward to most in your position?

As a field person, I often wondered why NRCS offers particular practices and not others.

I look forward to make those decisions that will have direct results in applying forestry related practices out in the field. I will enjoy having a say in both program policy and practice standards before they become official. I also hope to serve on National teams that decide what financial practices NRCS offers.

Q: Do you have any professional or personal goals for 2015?

I have a goal to be active in many of Indiana's forestry based organizations. I would also like to meet with every NRCS technical team and with every DNR forester and wildlife biologist.

Q: When you aren't working for NRCS, what do you like to do in your spare time?

My wife Victoria and I both enjoy canoeing, hiking, and spending time with family. I also enjoy caving, pheasant hunting, and playing the guitar.

Kudos to:

Jane Hardisty, State Conservationist, for being a true leader in getting soil health to the National level. With 40 years of SCS & NRCS Service, Jane has been instrumental in being a Community leader in County, State, and Federal Agricultural projects, administering money to help Indiana's need for conservation projects. Jane has been a major asset to National Headquarters with her lengthy details there.—**Jack Johnson, Civil Engineering Technician**.

Amanda Kautz, District Conservationist, for her assistance with an EQIP contract on Pinecrest Farms. Mr. Miller praised Amanda for the assistance she provided on his farm. He is very satisfied with how things have gone with the NRCS office.—**Duane Riethman, Area Engineer**

Dena Marshall, Area Resource Soil Scientist, for her feature interview in the *Level 3 Dig Deeper, Mysteries in the Soil* NACD publication. - **Darrell Nicholson, SE Area Conservationist**

Bill Lambert, District Conservationist, for lending his forestry expertise and technical skills to the Southeast area and Decatur County while we are still awaiting the state forester position to be filled.—**Mike Hughes, District Conservationist**

DeKalb County and Northeast Area Staff that contributed to the application processing/mapping and quality assurance. Through their contribution efforts, we were able to obligate 42 CSP contracts for 14-1 sign-up. This is 49% of the entire state enrollment. The team approach and efforts taken to get this task accomplished is commendable and appreciated. —**Mary Jo Woodruff, CSP Program Specialist**

Bill Lambert, District Conservationist, for an excellent presentation given to the Steuben County SWCD's Lake Life course. Bill provided an insightful overview of Indiana Forestry to 25 Steuben residences and was able to share the importance conservation to an audience that had little knowledge of forestry or woodland conservation. Bill represented USDA and NRCS superbly, and his presentation was greatly appreciated.—**Brian Musser, District Conservationist**

The entire Rensselaer Technical Team for all each of you do – acting District Conservationists, special projects, assisting outside the technical team area, working with challenging individuals, resolving crisis. You are greatly appreciated! - **Ruth Montgomery, Rensselaer Technical Team Leader**

Susan Grivas, Soil Conservationist, Tom Varns, Soil Conservationist, and Kristi Kennedy, Soil Conservationist for all the work they do to support the day to day workload of the Rockville Field Office. The work they complete allows me to support the South West Area as Soil Health Team Leader and participate in the many Soil Health activities that I am a part of.—**Don Donovan, District Conservationist**

Kimberly Neumann, NE Area Conservationist, for helping to set up the electronic surveys to collect input from the field related to priority resource factors for Indiana's Staffing Tool updates, and the soil health skills assessment. The input received will help Indiana NRCS prioritize staffing given future budget and work needs, and training and guidance needs to ensure all of our planners can provide expert technical assistance to our farmers. - **Shannon Zezula, State Resource Conservationist**

Dave Stratman, State Biologist, for doing an excellent job giving the northeast area an update on the status of pollinators at our October meeting! Thanks, Dave! - **Kimberly Neumann, NE Area Conservationist**

Donna Coleman, Budget Officer, for her assistance to Oklahoma NRCS. I called Donna to ask her a quick question and she immediately offered to help us out. As of now, Donna has uploaded three sets of supporting documentation for Oklahoma to SharePoint which otherwise wouldn't have been done in a timely manner. Often, we are quick to criticize or point blame at employees – so, I wanted to let you know of the wonderful customer service she provided to me. —**Connie Fitzpatrick, Oklahoma State Conservationist's Secretary**

Hoosier Happenings

OCTOBER IS DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH

Held each October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month is a national campaign that raises awareness about disability employment issues and celebrates the many and varied contributions of America's workers with disabilities. [AgLearn](#) has resources to help you get more educated about these issues.

Civil Rights: Reasonable Accommodation Training

This course will increase your general understanding of what constitutes a reasonable accommodation for a disability, what is required to obtain an accommodation, and the managers' responsibilities in the process.

Hidden Talent: How Leading Companies Hire, Retain, and Benefit from People with Disabilities

Based on a multi-year research project by experts in human resources management, economics, and communications, this book showcases the practices of organizations that are actively hiring, training, and retaining people with disabilities—and thriving as a result.

Perfectly Able: How to Attract and Hire Talented People with Disabilities

Illustrated with enlightening personal stories, this one-of-a-kind book offers practical guidance for companies large and small on how to hire and retain talented and motivated people from within this largely untapped pool of potential employees.

Go to [Ask AgLearn](#) Now for the easiest and fastest way to find answers about your training needs. This site allows you to browse an extensive knowledgebase, view the most commonly asked questions, submit your inquiries, and more.

COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Wow! NRCS employees in Indiana are generous! As of this morning, Indiana NRCS employees have pledged \$7,974 to various charities under the umbrella of the Combined Federal Campaign. That's more than any of the other USDA agencies in Indiana. For as little as \$1 a pay period, that's \$26/year, your donation can make a difference in someone's life. Maybe there is an organization that has helped you or a loved one that you want to give back to.

Please visit http://www.cfcindiana.org/root/index.php?main_menu_id=1&content_id=5107 to view the numerous charities and make your pledge to the CFC. **Every dollar makes a difference.**

DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST HONORED

The Environmental Studies Program at Manchester University dedicated the outdoor classroom cabin during homecoming on Saturday October 11th and honored Joe Updike, Wabash County NRCS District Conservationist with the 2014 Stewardship Award.



Joe Updike receives the 2014 Stewardship Award from Jerry Sweeten, Manchester University Director of Environmental Studies.

Manchester University honors someone each year that has shown outstanding service and commitment to the Environmental Studies Program. Both NRCS and the Wabash County SWCD are partners in the Middle Eel River Watershed Initiative (MERWI) which is led by Manchester University, everyone has worked hard together to help get conservation practices on the ground.



Joe Updike surrounded by his family members.

Partnership Links

IN Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Bi-Weekly

Updates: www.iaswcd.org/whatsnew/index.html

IN Conservation Partnership: <http://icp.iaswcd.org>

IN Dept. of Environmental Management: www.in.gov/idem

IN Dept. of Natural Resources: www.in.gov/dnr

IN State Dept. of Agriculture, Division of Soil Conservation:
<http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/>

Purdue University: www.purdue.edu

USDA Farm Service Agency: www.fsa.usda.gov

Hoosier Happenings (cont.)

INDIANA NRCS FARM BILL UPDATE

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) – Indiana obligated \$14.05 million for 573 contracts on 84,000 acres and ended the fiscal year with a backlog of 410 applications for \$6 million.

Indiana obligated \$1.4 million for 59 contracts for 4,500 acres in total for initiatives. This includes the following:

- *State Specialty Crop Funding* (Includes Seasonal High Tunnels) \$212,000 for 20 contracts on 173 acres
- *Organic Initiative*: obligated \$80,000 for 9 contracts on 285 acres
- *On-Farm Energy Initiative*: obligated \$157,000 for 9 contracts on 135 acres
- *National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)*: obligated \$397,000 for 10 contracts on 1,100 acres
- *Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (EQIP)*: obligated \$456,000 for 26 contracts on 2,100 acres
- *Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) – Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI)*: obligated \$307,000 for 5 contracts on 790 acres
- *CCPI*: \$43,260 for 3 contracts on 774 acres

We also funded 14 contracts for Veteran Farmers for \$91,034 on 570 acres and 123 contracts for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers/Limited Resource Farmers/Socially Disadvantaged participants for \$2.6 million on 12,600 acres.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) – The Stewardship CSP 14-1 sign-up obligated over \$1.2 million for 86 contracts on 58,530 cropland acres and 58 forestland acres. The agricultural acreage exceeded Indiana's original agricultural acres allocation with additional acres provided from other states. We returned the majority of our forestland acres as there was only one application that was actually contracted.

Currently, there are 193 renewal applications in ProTracts pending evaluation during FY15. Participants whose 10-1 and 10-2 contracts were expiring were eligible for renewal if requested by September 12, 2014. These applications will use next year's acres allocation making for a more competitive sign up in 15-1. Renewed applications do not have to compete for acres as this was the benefit for accepting a renewal.

Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) – Indiana has received 24 ACEP-WRE applications totaling 1,455 acres. We have funded 11 ACEP WRE applications (865 acres) and their restorations for \$3.1 million dollars.

Indiana received \$2.4 million to manage prior year WRP, including new restoration, modifications to existing restoration contracts. Remaining funds, approximately \$1.9 million will be carried over into the next fiscal year to continue the management of prior year WRP. No ACEP-WRE may be used for prior WRP restoration until no prior year funds remain.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) – Two of the nine state applicants and an additional 5 applications (CCA and national) that include Indiana as part of their project were invited to submit a full proposal. However, one national proposal and one Indiana proposal has decided not to move forward with a full proposal. Final proposals were reviewed in October and recipients will be notified after November 14th.

Conservation Innovation Grant Recipients Announced - NRCS funded 47 grants totaling \$15.7 that will help develop and demonstrate cutting-edge ideas to accelerate innovation in private lands conservation. Over two million dollars will be utilized for projects that impact Indiana.

Three projects were funded that will directly impact Indiana and **all three have a soil health focus**. Projects include:

- *National Corn Growers Association* – This project includes seven states and will focus on economic and environmental benefits of helping crop producers focus on soil health.
- *National Association of Conservation Districts* – This project will work nationwide to evaluate where strip/no-till, cover crops and crop rotation practices can best work together, and conduct economic and cost-benefit evaluations.
- *Purdue University* – This project is solely within Indiana and will document soil health assessment methods and jump start carbon and nutrient cycles for the sustainable restoration of soil health.

PERSONNEL UPDATE

SELECTIONS FOR VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Jennifer Walker selected for the District Conservationist position at the LaGrange Field Office effective 10-5-14
Albert Tinsley selected for the State Compliance Specialist position on the Technology Staff effective 10-5-14.

RETIREMENTS

Roger Williams, Engineering Technician, on the Greensburg CIT effective 10-31-14

Historical Photo of the Issue



As the Public Affairs staff continues to sort through filing cabinets of old photos to archive, we thought it would be fun to share some of our favorites and the descriptions that were included with each photo.

DATE: October, 1964

LOCATION: LaGrange County

TITLE: “Tongues” of Fox Subsoil

DESCRIPTION: “Tongues” of Fox subsoil exposed in gravel pit. Due to the extremely dry condition of the soil, the soil was very stable and resisted the pull of gravity to a greater extent than ever before. This permitted excavating the gravel from around the “tongues” and exposing them to a much greater degree. The picture shows the nature of the tongues, also their size, number, shape, and frequency.

Mark Your Calendar

November:

- 11: Veteran’s Day—Offices Closed
- 12: Southeast Area Meeting
- 13-14: Mentoring Orientation, Louisville, KY
- 25: Veteran’s Day Pitch-in
- 27: Thanksgiving—Offices Closed

December:

- 1-31: Veteran’s Month
- 2: National COOP
Northeast Area Meeting
- 3: SAC/FAC Meeting
- 4: Indiana Field Employee Council Meeting
- 5: World Soil Day



December continued

- 10: Southeast Area Meeting
- 11: Civil Rights Committee Meeting
Northwest Area Meeting
- 16: ICP Leaders Meeting
- 18: Southwest Area Meeting
- 25: Christmas day—Offices Closed

January

- 1: New Year’s Day—Offices Closed
- 6: Northeast Area Meeting
- 7: SAC/FAC Meeting
- 12: IASWCD Annual Conference
- 14: Southeast Area Meeting
- 27: Northwest Area Meeting

You can find up-to-date information about upcoming events on the Indiana SharePoint site at:
<https://nrsc.sc.egov.usda.gov/central/in/Lists/Calendar/calendar.aspx>